A Washington D.C. man who was Lee H. Oswald's commanding officer in the Marines for seven months today said the accused assassin of President Kennedy was a superoilious wise guy who went out of his way to annoy people.

John K. Donovan, 29, of 2009 Belmont road N.W., a physics instructor at Ascension Academy, was a first lieutenant in charge of a six-man section of a counter air operations center. Oswald, he said, was a private under his command from March, 1, until September, 1959.

"His revolt was against any kind of authority," said Mr. Donovan, now a Captain in Marine Air Control Squadron 24 on weekend reserve duty here. "He wasn't expelled from society. He expelled himself from it."

Mr. Donovan said Oswald's philosophy is best summed up in the slain Texas gunman's own oft-repeated words, "There are a few of us in the world who know what's going on. The majority haven't got any idea."

Oswald, according to his section commander, was an an officer-baiting trouble-maker, who practiced the role so assiduously that the rest of the enlisted men warned him to cut it out lest he tar them with the same brush.

"He used to read most of the time," said Mr. Donovan, "History books magazines and a Russian newspaper he used to get. He also spent a lot of time studying the Russian language. There were no pocket books or comics for him.

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"One of his tricks was to lay a trap for some officer, particularly a field grade officer if he could catch one. He's study up on some particular world political situation and then go up to the officer and say, 'Sir, could you please explain the Venezuelan or Cambodian situation situation, sir.'

"He always put a 'sir' before and after speaking to an officer but he did it in such a superoilious, pointedly obsequious way that it became an insult rather than a courtesy.

"The poor officer would make a valiant attempt to answer the question, probably not knowing a whole lot about the specifics of whatever Oswald brought up. Then, Oswald would turn to me and say, 'Sir, what do you think of that, sir?'

"I knew what he was up to. He was just trying to show off his superior knowledge. He was smart enough. You have to have a GCT (general classification test) score of 110 to get into radar. That's the same score for getting a commission. But you could tell he was a self-educated man because there were rough edges to his knowledge."

Mr. Donovan recalled that he had to ask Oswald to get off the Marine Air Control Squadron 9 football team during the tour of duty at the lighter-than-air base at Tustin, Calif., near the big El Toro Marine air base.

"He played end for me," said his commander. "But he screwed up the squad so badly I had to ask him off the squad. I so happened we had a pre y good college player named Tib Czik, who was a captain, as quarterback.

"Oswald kept talking back in the huddle, and demanding to know why an officer was running the team and criticizing the plays."

Oswald, who was 20 years old then, antagonzied everybody by saying things like, "If the Marines are so smart, why don't they recognize guys like me?" Mr. Donovan said Oswald always claimed he knew more than 90 per cent of the officers and non-coms. He was dependable on watch, when it was his duty to scan the radar scope for aircraft but in the long slack period he rarely associated with the others in the section.

"I heard about him before I ever met him," Mr. Donovan said ."I had a friend, a lieutenant named Bill Trail who was the O.D. in Japan when Oswald got in trouble there. He told me how Oswald had gotten drunk and cursed an officer. We also knew about his court martial for not reporting that he owned a pistol.

"Trail knew Oswald was going to be in my outfit and warned me, 'This guy is a talker. He's out of his mind.'

"I also dated an airline stewardess about that time and found out from her that she had been dating Oswald. She told me, 'That guy is a real nut.'"

When Oswald requested and received a hardship discharge in September, 1959, because his mother needed financial aid, Mr. Donovan said the other men in the squadron offered to help. He turned them down curtly, Mr. Donovan said.

A month later, word reached the squadron that Oswald had defected to the Soviet Union, that he had turned up in Moscow signed an instrument of allegiance to the USSR.

"That compromised all our secret radio frequencies, call signs and authentication codes," said Mr. Donovan. "He knew the location of every unit on the West Coast and the radar capability of every installation. We had to spend thousands of man-hours changing everything, all the tactical frequencies and verify the destruction of all the codes.

"Oswald was a very unpopular man that month."

Mr. Donovan is a graduate of Georgetown University Foreign Service School and studied physics at the University of Dayton; after his three-and-ahalf years of active duty ended.

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